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Techno-Whimsy

Liz Dodds

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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
In Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Techno-Whimsy

by

Liz Dodds

November 12, 2003

Thesis Report

Approvals

Chief Advisor: Alan Singer

Signature: _____

Date: Feb 10, 2004

Associate Advisor: Karen Sardisco

Signature: _____

Date: Feb. 11, 2004

Associate Advisor: Belinda Bryce

Signature: _____

Date: Feb. 17, 2004

Department Chairperson: DON ARDAY

Signature: _____

Date: 2/18/04

I, Liz Dodds, prefer to be contacted each time a request for reproduction is made. I can be reached at the following address:

Liz Dodds

539 Meigs St.

Rochester, NY 14607

Signature: _____

Date: 2/22/04

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Thesis Proposal

In this thesis I plan to explore a whimsical meeting of biology and technology on the surfaces of acrylic on canvas paintings. Our current societal surroundings are increasingly dependent on technology and machines in all aspects of daily life. Scientific research and experiments are continually developing ways to fuse living organisms with man made parts. These are the underlying observations my paintings spring from. The paintings executed for my thesis will use imagery of fanciful creatures that resemble past or present (micro) organisms that have evolved with man made, mechanical or electrical parts. The interaction of these creatures will create a pictorial microcosm with combined mediums on the canvas. This whimsical space will become a departure point to explore various painting techniques I have been working with. The paintings' surfaces will be layered and scratched into, opaque in some areas and transparent in others. The canvases will convey a sense of spontaneity and energy with a strong use of line to define forms and bold colors. Research will include looking at many artists who have dealt with similar issues ranging from Joan Miró, Keith Haring, Elizabeth Murray, and Jean-Michel Basquiat, to graffiti art and cartoons.

Intro

The paintings in my thesis exhibition are a bookmark in the development of my ideas and processes which have evolved over the past seven years and through various mediums. During my undergraduate work as a ceramicist I was enthralled with the physicality of working with clay. I immediately began pushing the limits within the realm of ceramics by building large free-standing sculptures that barely fit into the largest kiln. The limitless potential for form and texture and the complete and total malleability of the material allowed more organic shapes than achieved with other 3-D materials. The outline, shape, and space these sculptures took became a precedent. The forms toyed with positive and negative spaces, they were organic, bulbous beings, entities I saw as living, caught mid-dance, mid-movement, mid-breath.

I was making sculpture and looking at sculptors. The sculptures and shapes made by artists such as Henry Moore and Joan Miró became very influential (see page 19). Their works seemed to be suggesting life, but not explaining it, drawn from life, but not mimicking it. They were about animated form. The sculptures I was working on then, in turn, became in my mind bodies I was building. To me, they each had their own personality...bulging, twisting, slumping...changing as the viewer moved around them. In all of my sculptures, there gradually came to be a struggle or juxtaposition between components. For example, in a few of the all-clay sculptures it seemed there was a growing, organic form wrapping around and nearly engulfing a more geometric, machined-looking shape (see page 19). Later on, I would weld pencil-rod around and through smaller ceramic components creating a contrast between natural and man-made materials. I was also experimenting with attaching machined parts onto the surface, such as metal pop-rivets into pre-drilled holes in the clay, creating the look of a metal spike "growing" from the form.

It was a natural progression, then, when I found myself with no clay or kiln after graduation, but a basement full of salvaged canvases and some house paint that I would try to translate the same form, the same animation, and the same juxtapositions onto a two-dimensional surface. My first paintings all started with a central fluid biomorphic shape, usually bleeding off all edges of the canvas. I would try to paint this shape with the suggestion of volume to reference the

three-dimensional forms I had previously been working with and paint it against a different (contrasting or complementary) colored background . It was at this time, however, when I was confronted with the problem of how to present a conflict (or sometimes symbiotic relationship) of the natural vs. the man-made without the use of contrasting materials. I was limiting myself to using only paint to explore the beginnings of this conceptual journey.

Concept

The inspirations behind my paintings have come from many different sources. When I first started painting I realized the ideas starting to form would have to be executed through imagery rather than materials. I began looking at life forms on multiple levels. Everything from micro-organisms to dinosaurs were fair game. My artwork is concerned with life, the chance, the development, the freak accident that anything anywhere has ever, is, or will be living. Thrown into this evolutionary car-crash are our current societal surroundings. Technology seems to be creeping ever closer to being the means of survival (at least for humans). Life forms are continually evolving as I write this. Technology and science are altering life forms in increasingly drastic ways.

I started looking into "other" worlds as sources of inspiration. Seemingly fantastic, yet very real environments and organisms not readily visible became intriguing whether it was underwater, microscopic, ancient, or of the cosmos. These all were unfamiliar territory yet connected to all life. I started making sketches from electron-microscope photography. Micro-organisms are some of the most interesting shapes I've ever seen. Amoebas are my favorite. They are the quintessential biomorphic form, constantly undulating and changing: gooey, curvy, forgiving shapes that can start one way and end quite another. A grain of pollen becomes a giant planet with divots and peaks. A flea is a monstrous beast about to devour entire forests. Atoms, DNA, and cell structures look like science fiction props. The very small somehow ends up seeming very large when taken out of context.

Creatures found in aquatic environments also have been interesting sources. Flipping through a National Geographic or catching a show on the Discovery Channel has often exposed me to a myriad of organisms I am amazed exist. The specially evolved survival and sensory capabilities of underwater species is phenomenal. It is apparent that plant and animal bodily systems come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and have evolved that way for countless reasons. For everything that exists, something else has evolved specifically in relation to it. Especially interesting are certain species who actually glow, flash, or emit light. This is, essentially, electricity but as a result of

internal body chemistry. Science could never create a system so perfect.

Dinosaurs once ruled the earth. The fact that we were not the ruling species seems surreal. That we, as humans, could have been a light snack for a towering "monster" is ridiculous, but true. We owe our current reign to environmental cosmic chance. What would the earth be like if a giant meteor did not strike the planet, did not cause mass extinction of the dinosaurs and eventually lead to the rise of mammals on land? What sort of species would have evolved? It is an unfathomable mix of variables that have come together for our current surroundings. We are only beginning to understand organisms and life forms that long ago used to exist, and when doing so, it is only natural to look around and ask what will come to exist in the future? Will the science and technology of humans forever change the future of evolution?

I became increasingly aware of these questions in the past couple of years. Everyday there is a breakthrough which makes our lives seemingly easier. The invention and manufacture of these items seems to be rapidly accelerating over the past century. My grandmother was born in 1895, well before the invention of the airplane. The internet was not used when I went to high school. We have seen the successful implantation of artificial hearts, space travel, video-conferencing, and countless other technologies. Computers are smarter than we are, and robotics are increasingly used rather than more expensive, tiresome, unreliable human labor in manufacturing settings. It is with all this already in mind that I came across a few interesting articles that spurred my thinking about the relationship of the organic and the man-made which eventually translated itself into my artwork.

One thing chanced upon was a news blip about researchers growing living cells onto microchips. I did not see the whole story and thought it sounded sci-fi and impressive, especially since I am still continually awed by such modern marvels as the telephone and the television I was watching the news on. I looked into it, and indeed they have fused organic life with the microchip:

Researchers at the University of Arizona are exploring ways to "grow" microchips using proteins from living cells. Microchips--those magic devices found in everything from cell phones to automobiles, from computers to clothes dryers--currently are made by lithography, etching and soldering. The new biological interconnects would bypass these processes with long strings of proteins called microtubules (MT). They'll connect

transistors and other devices in microchips by growing between the device junctions. They're solder-free, don't involve lithography or etching, and are highly uniform. Once the proteins connect devices, they will be coated with metal and turned into microscopic wires. (Stiles 1)

In trying to find information on this kind of breakthrough, I came across more and more information on similar types of research. This science, apparently, is the wave of the future.

There seems to be wide-open territory for biotechnology. Another article, this time on the first Nerve Cell-Silicon Microchip, states:

"It has a touch of science fiction," admit the scientists who have wired up the first conducting nerve chip. The electronic circuit, grown from silicon and nerve cells, brings brain repair chips, advanced biosensors and biological computers a small step toward reality. 'Neuroelectronics' combines nerve cells and microchips. It could one day lead to 'Neuroprosthetic' implants replacing damaged nervous tissue, and advanced computers mimicking living, learning circuits. (Pearson 1)

Soon, everywhere I looked there were advancements that tied into my thinking. NASA has developed the "spider-bot", a seven inch tall, six-legged robotic spider designed to navigate rougher terrain found on Mars while collecting data on its environs. And soon "the torpedo-shaped Wisor is due to begin crawling through New York City's leaky steam pipes to weld cracks later this year. Wisor finds, cleans and fixes the holes in the pipes, and has five cameras to help it navigate the dangerous twists and turns" (Stone 43). Another example is a project at Duke University involving implants in a monkey's brain that allows it to move a computer's mouse cursor with only its eyes. The research has recently advanced so that the monkey can now move a robotic arm just by thinking about it (Blakeslee). These hybrids, robots, and artificial intelligences are the beginnings of future species. If humans start the ball rolling, will biology and technology combine to create new breeds that evolve on their own?

The complexity of these technologies and questions are not for the general public, or an artist, to understand and answer. They are, however, very much reflective of the current times and atmospheres of thought. My paintings are a reaction to the world around me. The fanciful creatures created on the surfaces of the canvas are playful musings on this more serious topic.

The organic and the manufactured come together in organisms drawn to have electrical, mechanical or man-made parts. I use shapes that reference all kinds of plant and animal life and

layer them with doodles of wires, microchips, batteries and outlets.

Influences

During the time I was starting to grow my conceptual ideas, I began looking more at other artists' work, especially painters. Like all artists, my work has stylistically been influenced a little by everything I have ever been exposed to and looked at. It is impossible to cover all of these here, so I will try to focus on artists who had a major impact during my course-work at RIT. Previously I had already been exposed to such masters as Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Matisse, all of whose work I very much admired. I always liked Picasso and Matisse's use of bold colors and simplification of shapes, as well as their strong use of line. So, when looking for new artists I tended to seek out the contemporary equivalents whose work I was similarly attracted to.

Before seeking out contemporary artists to look at, however, I reexamined some of my favorites but this time around I looked at Moore's drawings and Miro's paintings rather than sculptural works. I was and am very attracted to the way Moore portrays his three-dimensional shapes on paper and the way he was able to transform parts of the figure or body into abstracted works. His sculptures are hulking curvaceous abstracted forms even on paper and the viewer can easily picture themselves circling the sketched shapes. I also was thinking of the shapes I put on the canvas as two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional forms and trying to figure out how to represent space on a flat plane.

Miró's paintings and drawings seem to create intimate cosmos populated by fanciful creatures, shapes and lines. These elements interact and overlap in their composition to create a playground for his symbols. His symbols often seem drawn and inspired by nature, yet not quite mimicking it. An eye, a foot, waving tentacles and geometric shapes: parts are disconnected and disfigured by the loose intuitive style of his drawing and his components never quite form a whole (see page 19). His style is at once fluid and sporadic, disjointed and harmonized. Miró seems to add parts wherever he pleases but always ends up with a solid composition. I am very much drawn to Miró's use of black to outline and define many of his shapes. His playful visual musings on the many forms life takes inspired me to outline the imagined beings on the surfaces of my

paintings more intuitively and quickly.

A more contemporary artist that has always particularly caught my eye is Keith Haring. I was first attracted by Haring's bold graphic style. His linear drawings that started in the subways and streets as graffiti art seemed to reflect a certain energy and youthfulness that transcended the elitism of the "fine art" world (see page 20). The work tied into current political issues, music, and popular culture of the eighties. Haring developed his own language of symbols which has been described stylistically as "primitive", but combined with modern iconography: "In place of the classical bacchanalian wine and song are omnipresent altars to technology: telephones whose receivers are off the hook, televisions, computers and in later work, robotic monstrosities with TV heads" (Blinderman 16). The title of a retrospective exhibition "Future Primeval" nails this idea on the head. In his essay accompanying the exhibition, curator Barry Blinderman describes Haring's work in ways that very much influenced the direction of my own artwork. He states:

The TV, itself (and later, the computer) is a pervasive image in Haring's work; it refers to our instantaneous receipt of information through the electronic medium. Carrying this association to a more symbolic level--electronics can be seen as a unifying force that courses through all beings and things, endlessly transmitted, transferred, and transformed (16).

Even in the eighties, artists were beginning to feel the ever tightening hold of technology on our lives. "The message, never specific or singular in a Haring, is possibly the hallucinatory interface of biology and technology in our increasingly cybernetic society" (Blinderman 16).

Despite the sometimes dark-sounding subject matter, however, Haring presents his images in an accessible, non-threatening, almost playful way. His art deals with and comments on serious issues, but is still light in a visual sense. This visual universality draws me to his work. Similarly, I hope, my own paintings delve into a contemplative, yet inviting territory, a personal continuation of previous artists' struggles with our culture of machines. The "Future Primeval" translates itself into my own mix of primitive and ancient life forms evolving with their modern mechanistic parts.

Becoming familiar with Haring's work and the scene he was a part of exposed me to a number of other artists who have become influential to my own work such as Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Kenny Scharf's style has also been referred to as "future primeval." Scharf

often uses appropriated cartoon imagery in his work to make associations between the past and future, for example he often juxtaposes images of characters from the Flinstones with those of The Jetsons. His "art infuses pop icons, Homeric chimeras, and sinuous biomorphic forms with a symbolism reflecting electronic media's insistent grip on our most primal fantasies" (Blinderman 9). I am not as interested with how Scharf actually handles his paint or his work stylistically, but more the similar concepts he seems to working from. His work seems to insistently find the interconnectedness of life through the ages from a globby organic stew to a slick futurism complete with fictional cartoonish characters populating his canvases (see page 20). Looking at his manifestations of these ideas has definitely broadened my own thinking, in terms of the creatures I create in my own work and how they relate to the evolution and continuation of life forms through the ages.

Quite the opposite in terms of how his own work has influenced my own is Jean-Michel Basquiat. Basquiat's handling of his materials is complex, instinctive, and urgent. When I look at a Basquiat painting, I am immediately excited to paint. Like DeKooning, Basquiat seemed to attack his canvases, scribbling and scratching through multiple layers of information. In his drive to push the limits of each individual work, Basquiat uses irreverent strokes, often covering parts of paintings others would see as finished or complete (see page 20). Basquiat is a visual risk-taker, looking at his work allowed me to look at mine in a new way. If, in the middle of the painting process, I found myself stuck or having a problem area, I used to either over work it in an attempt to appease my own aesthetic or abandon it altogether. Now, I have realized that sometimes partially or completely covering something with a new layer can be more visually exciting than leaving all revealed. I think this has allowed the surfaces of my own work to become more complex, more layered, and more selective about what is left for the viewer. The viewer gains more of a sense of process and time with clues showing through from otherwise eliminated parts of the painting.

Looking at Basquiat's work also spurred me to try using oil stick in addition to acrylic paint. His combination of materials creates a unique effect. You can obtain a much faster, harder line with

oil stick than you can with paint on a brush because there is no need to stop and “re-load” the brush. You can achieve the look of a drawing on the surface of a painting yet can also blend the oil stick into the wet acrylic to get a very painterly effect. Basquiat’s work speaks to me about process: that painting is not something you do to get an end result, but an interaction with time and materials complete with drips, scribbles, and “mistakes” that combine to create an original record of a human event.

The last two artists I will discuss were brought to my attention during my graduate work at RIT: Elizabeth Murray and Carroll Dunham. I became very interested in Elizabeth Murray’s work as a result of her visit to RIT. Murray’s art has an animated, cartoonish quality about it that makes it seem to jump off the wall. She is a master at rendering volume not only through her shaped canvases, but also by her application of paint (see page 21). Murray’s visual vocabulary of “domestic” objects becomes a springboard for her buoyant style. Cups, dressers, and shoes swell and balloon into gorgeous biomorphic shapes.

Like many of the other artists I have mentioned, Murray embraces the influence and aesthetic of cartoons in her own work, she states in an interview with Joan Simon: “Cartoons were the first art I saw. I loved them. I had comic books for the pictures more than for the little stories. It was the color, the line, the movement” (7). Cartoons allow the imagination to assign anthropomorphic qualities and exuberant energy to any regular objects. Murray inspired me to create a more active interaction between the components and creatures in my paintings. By looking at her techniques, I realized painted forms can also seem bulging and moving, practically exploding with activity. Murray’s bold use of color also adds to the vivaciousness of her work. She holds nothing back in the combinations she chooses to work with. This lively use of bright hues may also be a result of the influence of animation. Her saturated colors have also become a source of inspiration for my own work.

Carroll Dunham also uses a cartoon aesthetic in his work. He creates worlds on the surfaces of his paintings where a very strange population of creatures interact. Fierce, aggressive, and very obviously male most of the time, his little “people” are constantly in the midst of attacking

each other (see page 21). He combines these linear characters with a very painterly style to create unique surfaces. His subject matter repeats over and over in all of his paintings, yet all of his works vary compositionally and stylistically. He uses the interaction of these characters as the core basis of his works, but lets their representations and narratives evolve which I relate to in the production of my own work. In an interview with Matthew Richie, Dunham explains:

You have to hang what you're going to do on something, an armature in your mind. My armature has become these pictures of places and these characters. But I come to that just as intuitively. It isn't a real narrative. It's a motif, that becomes the armature for doing all these paintings and drawings. Narrative is a projection onto that. When you look at paintings you can run the narrative in your mind--forwards, backwards, sideways. Things can be what you decide them to be, there's no user's manual, no narrator, just pictures. Even though it's nameable, it is still very open as a story (91).

The armature metaphor resonates within my own practices. The concepts and resultant creatures I have been working with allow me to continue producing work, but the work has the option to change and evolve as I change and evolve as a painter.

Process

The concepts and influences behind my work can begin to explain where its inspiration comes from, however, these concepts could never explain exactly how it happens. The paintings chosen to show in my thesis exhibition would have never developed without major amounts of time working through techniques and processes. These intellectualized concepts, visual influences, and physical workings somehow combine and react together in the studio, resulting in my own body of work. The eight paintings exhibited were representative of the best of over forty paintings I executed during the year and a half at RIT preceding my thesis exhibition.

I have never been able to do any preliminary sketches for my paintings. From start to finish, I have realized there is no predicting how a painting will end up based on how it is started. For years I have begun with a centralized curvaceous shape as a starting point for my paintings. I have strayed little from this ritual, however, the recognition of this form by the end of painting, has changed a great deal. A blank canvas can be intimidating, and as a result, I come back to these fluid biomorphic shapes again and again as a way to begin, a way to get my feet wet per se. This initial contact with the canvas is crucial for me, as it must be intuitive, fast, and involve my entire body in relation to the canvas. I first sketch the outline of this form with compressed charcoal onto the primed surface. This sketch is done with sweeping movements and a continuous line that can span the entire canvas, I rarely step back from the wall until the initial shape is laid down. This line, as it rolls, juts, and curves back on itself is usually dictated by the shape and size of the picture plane. I usually try to have this form bleeding off the edges so that it seems to be filling and squeezing out of the confines of the two dimensional surface. I also try to have a balance of what becomes positive and negative space with holes punching through the viscous appendages. This initial sketch divides the canvas into an object/ground relationship where, in my mind, the shape becomes a metaphorical "host" body for other creatures who later inhabit the surface.

The next steps are time-driven due to the fast-drying nature of the thin acrylic house paint I have been using. I try to pick contrasting or distinctive colors to make the difference between the form and its environment apparent. I start by filling in the shape I sketched using a large, course

brush. This type of brush usually adds a textured scruffiness on the surface. Since most of my works are larger, I am usually working from a can on the floor, moving around the canvas quickly, letting the paint string, drip and spatter as a record of this time-driven event. After the shape gets filled in, I usually go back with a couple more colors to add shading and highlights to hint at the three-dimensionality I am trying to convey. Immediately after filling in the central form, I hurriedly fill in the background. I use various shades of the chosen background color blended in to create a more interesting visual field. This entire process lasts only minutes due to the anticipation of the next step.

While the paint is still wet, I use a screwdriver to draw lines into the paint, revealing the white of the primed canvas below. This is a technique that I started using during my first year of graduate study. Previously, the painting would often start with the same amoeba-like shape, but I would then use media such as charcoal or pastels to define the sketches in this step. I discovered that carving the lines into the wet paint gave the surface more texture and the line more permanence than the other mediums.

The carved lines are drawings of creatures imagined: the intuitive sketches of animals with not only bones, wings, and horns but also wires, plugs, and microchips. I tend to start these drawings into the wet paint in the negative space around the central form. These creatures inhabit the same space, always interacting whether they are chasing, attacking, or mating with each other. The energy used to etch these organisms onto the surface comes through in their limitless, sporadic manifestations and the quality of the mark making. Once again, this process is done quickly. I have a very limited amount of time to cover the entire surface with marks before the paint gums up. If the paint thickens the scratching does not reveal the white of the canvas, thus not creating a line. It involves my entire physical being, as I bounce towards and away from the wall to inspect each creature in relation to the entire composition continually throughout the process. Much like stream-of-consciousness writing, I continually add sketches and lines until the space is exhausted. There is no option to fuss over small details or reconsider a move. The best examples of this stage are seen on pages 27 (*Drill, figure 1*) and 28 (*Wire, figure 1*).

Most of the time the canvas is crowded with small creatures at this stage, but there are exceptions as I continue to try variations on techniques. Out of the works in my thesis exhibition, *Handsome* and *Probe* come from slightly different beginnings. In *Handsome*, instead of multiple smaller biotech organisms crowding around the circumference of the central form, I decided to scratch two larger creatures into the surface (see page 25, *figure 1*). These two creatures are of about equal size, interacting with each other "in front of" the central fluid shape. Their activity and precedence on the picture plane remains apparent as more layers are added to make the surface more complex. *Probe*, the last painting in terms of chronology, strays furthest from the aforementioned described steps. It starts with the usual amoeba shape and background, but then like *Handsome*, two large organisms fill the canvas defined by oil stick and paint rather than the thin scratched line.

Once the characters are defined by the scratches, I let the paint dry. My next step involves filling in many of the shapes created by the line drawings. Contrary to the quick, intuitive beginnings of these works, this step is usually tedious and time consuming. With either a solid color of paint or with blended oil stick, I carefully choose sections of each creature to fill in, making their presence more visible on the painting. *Wire, figure 1* (see page 28) is a perfect example of this step in the process, where I have filled in some of the scratched shapes on the top half of the painting with a deep purple color and have yet to finish the bottom half. The dark solid color usually is an opaque layer, covering any information on the surface beneath it. A technique I was only beginning to experiment with is filling in the shapes with oil stick. In both *Aquarium* and *Scraggle*, I used a dark colored oil stick to emphasize the positive spaces on the organisms but was able to blend it into a transparent coating rather than a solid layer. In *Handsome*, I decided to fill in the shapes with a semi-opaque orange paint, but as the painting progressed I also used the oil stick technique to redefine the characters on the final surface.

Anything from this step on varies greatly from painting to painting, with only the thematic concept holding across the board. Often, it is things that do not work during the process that spur me to continue painting layer after layer until the color and composition are satisfying. The first

steps are a given, everything afterwards seems risky and questionable. The series ends up a group with related visual components but with very different looks.

Geometric shapes such as squares and rectangles have become important visual elements in my recent work. These shapes have the ability to frame certain areas or creatures, adding emphasis. I also use them to divide parts of the canvas for color separations, giving a windowed effect. These also have been influenced by modern technology. People spend many hours a day in front of computers, where on the screen everything is presented within a square or rectangular frame, one within another. In *Aquarium*, I used transparent rectangular blocks of red overlayed on top of the existing painting (see page 22, *figure 2*). These red blocks then became the frame for even more entities to be created on the surface. *Scraggle* was executed much the same way.

In *Floater*, much of the original layer is obscured by what is happening on top of it. The underlying layers show through the watered down thin acrylic red, orange, and yellow used to divide the canvas along the rectangular divisions. Then, many of the white scratched lines that show through are reiterated with a blue oil stick. Next, I painted the semi-opaque squares of light blue to give a solid background for the final characters done in the Prussian blue oil stick: in all, a very busy painting. During these processes I was also becoming more aware that the thin layering of different colors is often more interesting than a single color by itself.

The paintings *Wire*, *Drill*, and *Probe* differ from the other five paintings exhibited. I started *Wire* and *Drill* around the same time and with my same formula of a figure/ground relationship with scratched in drawings that were then filled in with a solid color of paint. However, everything I tried after that seemed to fail miserably. I tried combinations of paint and oil stick and different compositional experiments for the creatures I was creating, but they were not working. For example, in *Wire*, *figure 2* (see page 28), you can make out layers that have been covered over by filling in the center with purple. Finding myself in a bit of a rut, and hearing the criticism that I should use more paint (be more "painterly") by Janet Fish, I decided I had nothing to lose and went at the canvases with a renewed anti-preciousness that I had lost with the pressure of deadlines. I reminded myself that it was not about the finished product (i.e. does not have to be

for your thesis) but the act and process of painting, and that painting is about taking risks. I tried some new techniques with thicker, more opaque layers of paint and painting more wet into wet in order to blend colors. My invented species were no longer defined only by line. I tried to use some of the same techniques while painting *Probe*, however, I feel the end result is less successful.

In overview, my time at RIT was spent learning how to paint, since I didn't really start until after my undergraduate work in ceramics. I was able to develop my concepts further and as a result my iconography, drawing and painting evolved along with the creatures I was thinking about. It is impossible to recall every mark, every brush stroke, sometimes I seem to come out of a fog at the end of hours in the studio, often remembering what I was listening to rather than what I was thinking about or doing. My thesis exhibition hopefully marks a beginning in personal artistic achievement in the realm of painting that I can continue to improve and develop outside of the academic setting.

List of Works Exhibited

Aquarium, 11/2002, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 97" x 49"

Floater, 11/2002, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 77" x 48"

Spine, 12/2002, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 78" x 52"

Handsome, 1/2003, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 72" x 48"

Scraggle, 1/2003, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 98" x 48"

Drill, 1/2003, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 50" x 49"

Wire, 2/2003, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 50" x 50"

Probe, 2/2003, Acrylic and oil stick on canvas, 74" x 48"

End Notes

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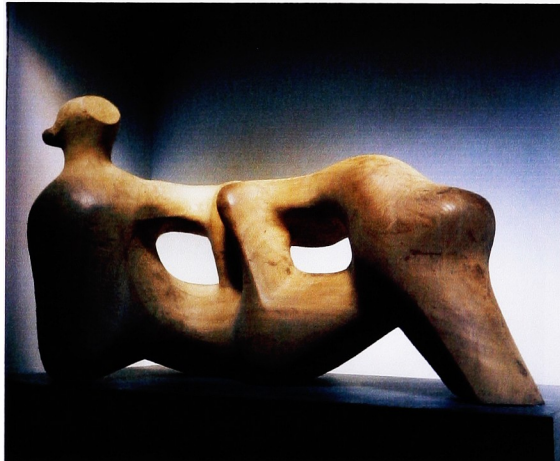
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Liz Dodds, *Struggle*, Stoneware, 48" x 29" x 21", 1997



Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure: Holes*, Elmwood, length 87.5", 1978



Joan Miró, *Personages in the Night, Guided by the Phosphorescent Tracks of Snails*, Gouache and turpentine paint on paper, 38 x 46 cm, 1940



Keith Haring, *Untitled*, Vinyl paint on vinyl Tarpaulin, 120" x 120", 1983



Kenny Scharf, *History of the World*, Oil and spray-paint on canvas, 115" x 91", 1987



Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Sienna*, Acrylic, oil paintstick, and silkscreen on canvas, 88" x 77", 1984



Elizabeth Murray, *Bowtie*, Oil on Canvas, 85" x 77.5", 2000



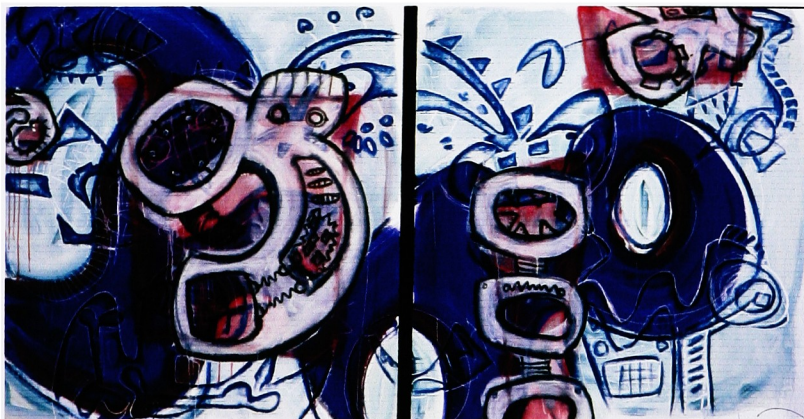
Carroll Dunham, *Beautiful Dirt Valley*, mixed media on linen, 79" x 69", 1997



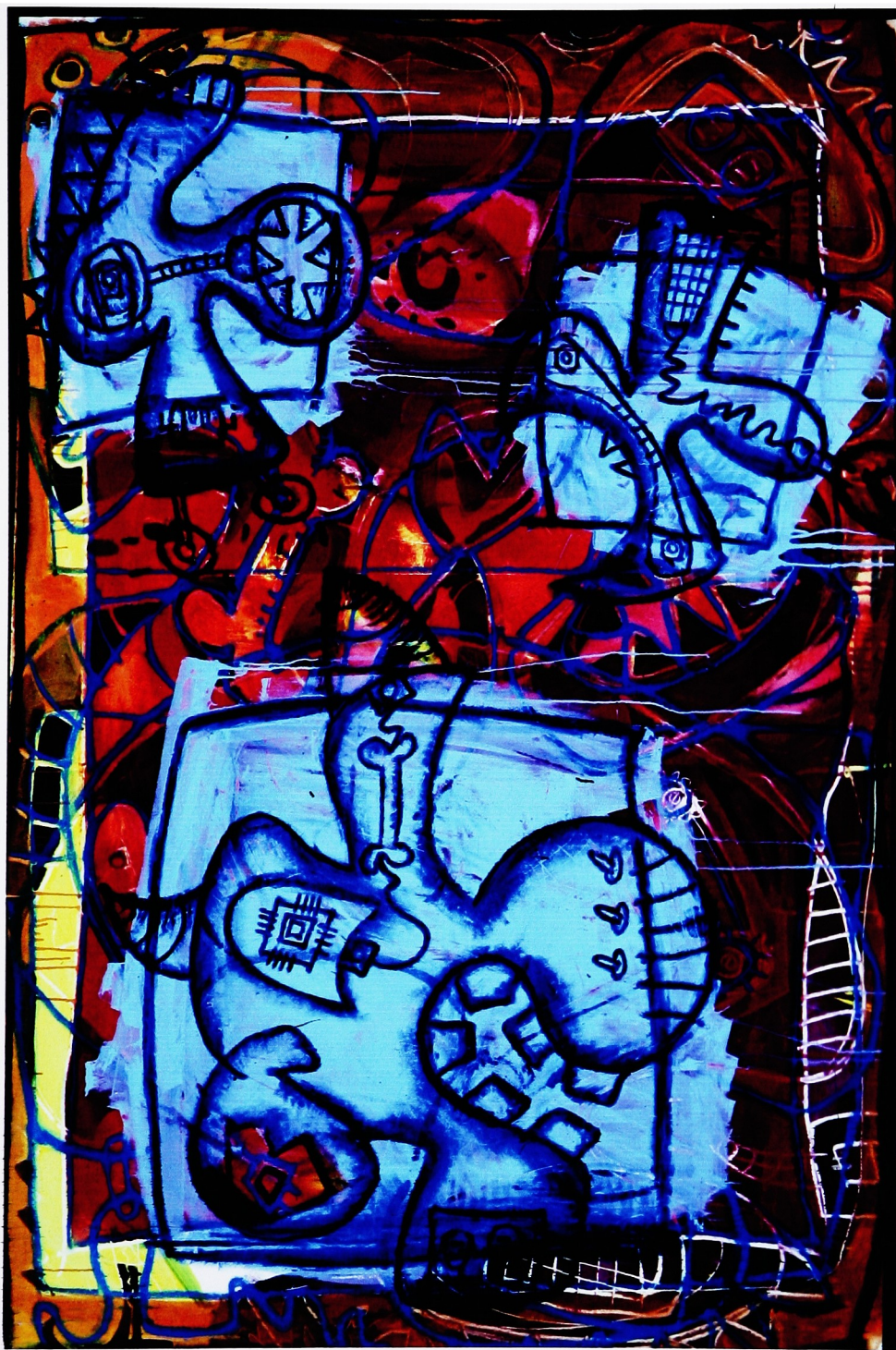
Aquarium, figure 1



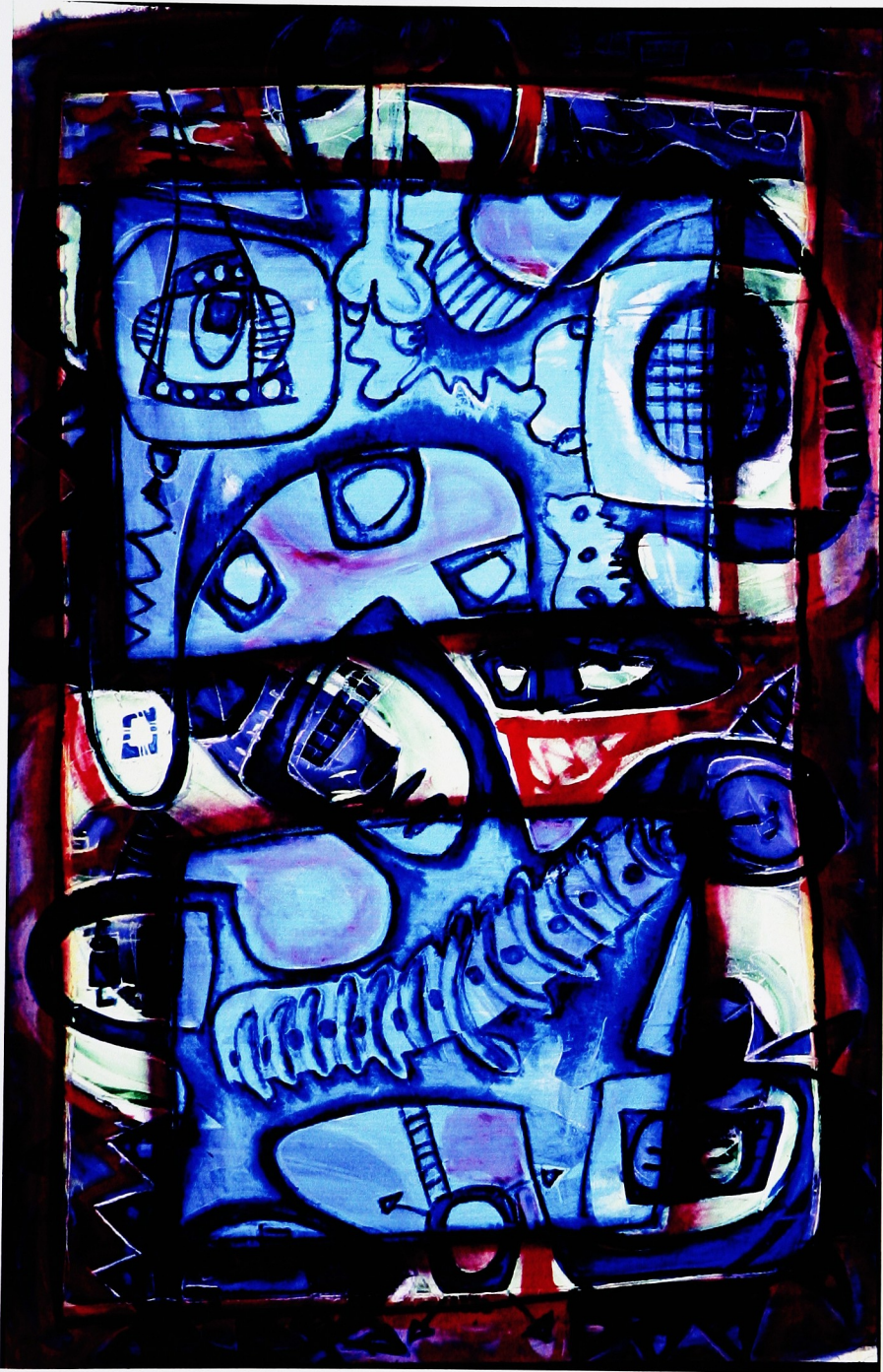
Aquarium, figure 2



Aquarium, figure 3



Floater



Spine



Handsome, figure 1



Handsome, figure 2



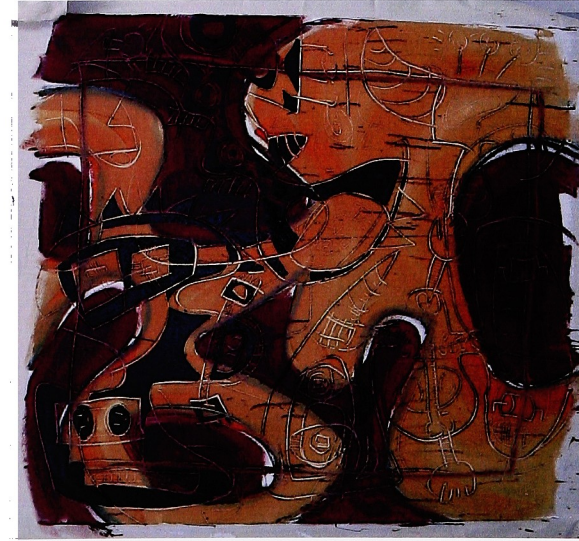
Scraggle



Drill, figure 1



Drill, figure 2



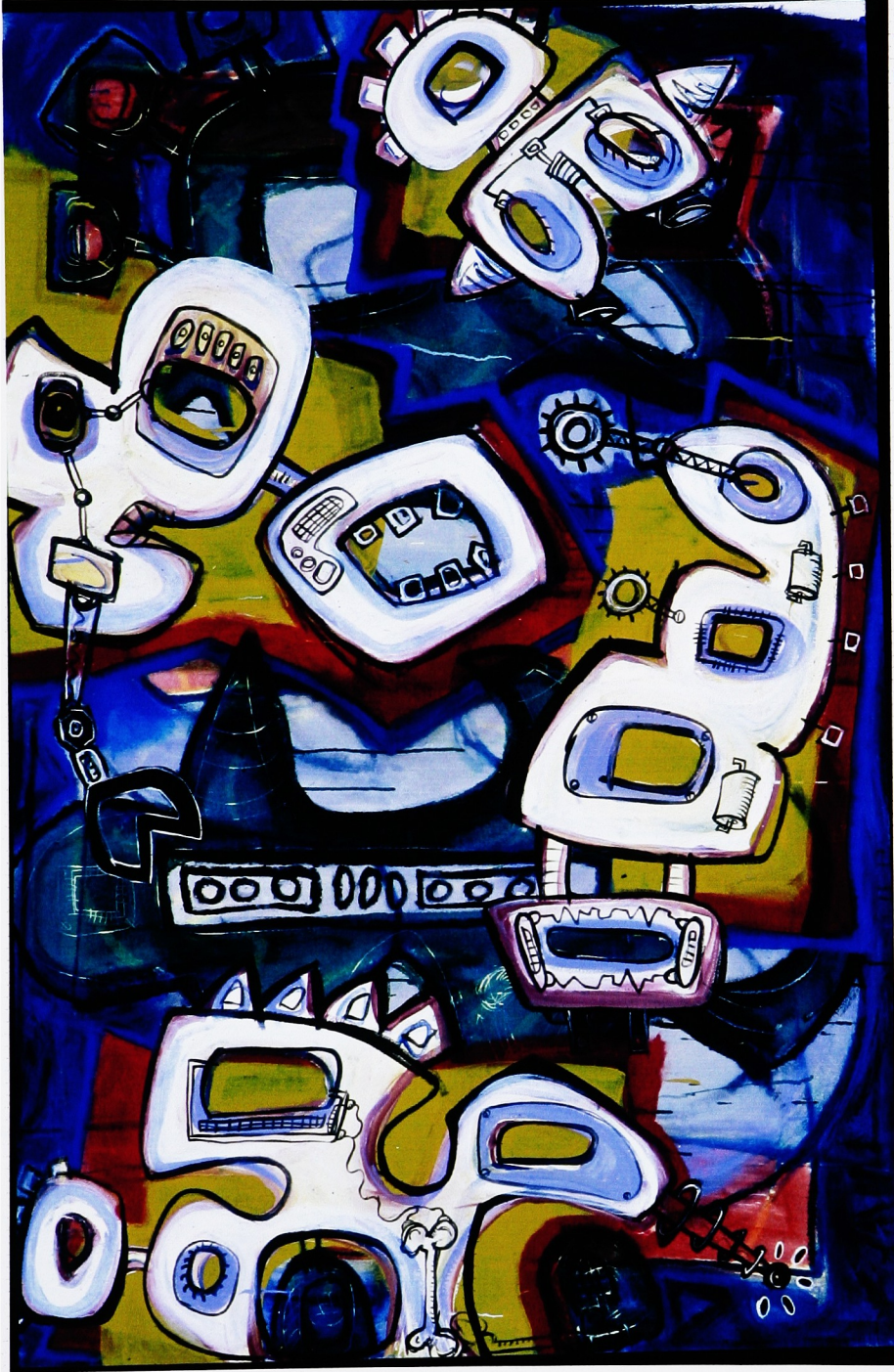
Wire, figure 1



Wire, figure 2



Wire, figure 3



Probe